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Volume 43, No. 1, January 2011

Carolina Country



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Snowboarding on Sugar Mountain, Banner Elk. (Photo by N.C. Tourism—Bill Russ)





Carolina country
(ISSN 0008-6746) (USPS 832800)
Read monthly in more than 650,000 homes
Published monthly by North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives, Inc.
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
3400 Sumner Blvd.
Raleigh, NC 27616
www.carolinacountry.com

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Your cooperative sends you Carolina Country as a convenient, economical way to share with its members information about services, director elections, meetings and management decisions. The magazine also carries legal notices that otherwise would be published in other media at greater cost.

Your co-op's board of directors authorizes a subscription to Carolina Country on behalf of the membership at a cost of less than $4 per year.

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Carolina Country magazine is a member of the National Country Market family of publications, collectively reaching over 8.4 million households.

Carolina Country is available on cassette tape as a courtesy of volunteer services at the N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, Raleigh, N.C. (888) 388-2460.

Periodicals postage paid at Raleigh, N.C., and additional mailing offices. Editorial offices: 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, N.C. 27616. Carolina Country® is a registered trademark of the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives, Inc.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes Form 3579 to Carolina Country, P.O. Box 27306, Raleigh, N.C. 27611.

Subscriptions: Individual subscriptions, $10 per year. $20 outside U.S.A. Schools, libraries, $6.

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The General Assembly and the cooperative story



By Carl W. Kornegay Jr.

The 2010 General Election brought an historic transformation to the North Carolina General Assembly and serves as a reminder that people have the power to make a change in their elected leadership with their votes.

On January 26, 2011, for the first time in 112 years, Republican legislators will hold a majority in the North Carolina Senate and House of Representatives. Being in the majority allows the Republicans to elect the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the top posts in the N.C. House and N.C. Senate, as well as make committee assignments, control the legislative agenda and determine the flow of legislation.

The great thing about serving on the board of an electric cooperative is that we represent the interests of our consumer-owners and can transcend party affiliation. We work with legislators from both sides of the aisle to advance the issues important to our consumer-members. In 2011, we look forward to working with all legislators whether they are new to the General Assembly or veterans. Serving in public office requires enormous hard work and determination, and a fierce commitment to public service.

With that in mind, we would be remiss if we did not thank those legislators who will not be returning to the General Assembly in January. Thank you for recognizing that co-ops focus on our consumer-owners' best interests. Thank you for listening to our concerns when we visited you at home and in Raleigh. Thank you for recognizing the benefits of the cooperative business model—one that is consumer-owned, locally governed and provides power at cost. Thank you for raising your hand in a legislative committee and asking, "How is this piece of legislation going to affect the electric cooperative consumers in my district?" Your service to the state is greatly appreciated.

Now, with the future in mind, we pledge to respond to any and all inquiries by legislators concerned about the interests of our members with prompt, accurate information. We encourage new legislators to listen to the concerns of our consumer-owners and call upon us for answers when issues arise that affect local cooperatives. Energy issues are complicated, and we know it. Please use your electric cooperative as a resource when considering legislation that will affect our consumer-owners.

I have been involved with my cooperative for 23 years, and it has been one of the more rewarding endeavors I've ever experienced. I am extremely proud to tell the story of my cooperative to anyone who will listen. Cooperatives do so many good things in the communities we serve. But first and foremost, I am proud of our employees who work hard every day to deliver safe, affordable, reliable power to our members. I am especially proud of their effort when restoring power during extreme weather conditions in the middle of the night, on weekends and holidays. It is their dedication as public servants that allows us in so many ways to comfortably enjoy this holiday season.

Carl W. Kornegay Jr. is board president of Tri-County EMC, the Touchstone Energy cooperative serving more than 24,000 member accounts in Wayne, Duplin, Lenoir, and parts of Johnston, Jones, Sampson and Wilson counties.

Happy Thanksgiving

I found on your website a recipe that I had lost! My mother always made it as an appetizer when the family got together for Thanksgiving. It was one of our favorites. She passed away two years ago. The holiday is difficult without her. This has comforted me. Bless you! You have made me so happy.

Debbie Colton

The power of Carolina country

When my mother got remarried, my family started going to my stepfather's house in the Blue Ridge Mountains on weekends. Before then, I had never really appreciated nature. But these mountains really opened my eyes. Living in the city during the week, I am constantly moving, with never a moment's rest. But weekends are my get-away time.

The mountains provide an excellent haven for relaxation. I am able to think. Think about what? I think about how grateful I am to have a wonderful family. I think about how time seems to stop when you let it. I think about how everyone needs to slow down and smell the roses and tune out the rest of the world.

We are a society built on technology, speed and competition. I've learned recently that the way I live my life and the way I should live my life are different. I live to receive good grades in school and ensure a good future. But what kind of future am I going to have if I only care about keeping up with today's society?

I've decided to stop living everyday for tomorrow and start living everyday for today.

Ashley McGown, Clemmons

Sock it to me

During our Thanksgiving dinner of this year, my 5-year-old granddaughter, Sarah, ask me what kind of cake I had made. I told her it was a Sock It to Me Cake. She looked up at me with a frown on her face and went running to her Mom and told her that Grandma put socks in her cake.

Shirley Hargus, Hudson

Ceiling fan

My husband died about two years ago. I did all the cooking and cleaning, and he handled all of the mechanical details of the house. With his untimely death, I have had a lot to learn. I keep a notebook listing details as I learn them—mostly when things go wrong or break. The fine article on ceiling fans ["On the House," December 2010] will definitely go into the notebook. However, how do you tell whether the fan is pushing air up or down?

Katherine M. Dunlap, Randolph Electric

Editor's Note: Looking up at the fan, if it's turning clockwise it's drawing air up.

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Coming home to Kyler

One of the hardest things that I have ever had to do was to say goodbye to my son as he left for Parris Island, S.C., to begin his boot camp training with the Marine Corps. Although I was so very proud of him, letting him go broke my heart.

What was supposed to be 13 weeks of training turned into 17 weeks for him due to his need for a surgical procedure when he arrived at Parris Island.

We were very anxious for him to begin and complete his training so that he could return home in time for the birth of his first child who was due in late September. Because of the delay in his training, we were afraid that he would not make it home in time.

He graduated on Friday, Sept. 25, 2009. We arrived back home that evening to find that his wife was in the beginning stages of labor.

On Saturday, Sept. 26, 2009, our precious grandson, Kyler Blaze, was born and his daddy was there to witness the miracle of his birth.

This picture was taken one week after Kyler was born. Each time I look at it, I am reminded of how proud I am of my son for sacrificing so much for his country, and how proud I am to be the "Nana" of this precious little boy.

We often joke about how Kyler was waiting for his daddy to get home before he made his first appearance and, thankfully, daddy made it home.

Ann B. Wilson, Lexington, EnergyUnited



This is my father's barn in our backyard after a snow in March 2009.

Michelle Hall, Dobson



Our first snow of 2010 last February.

Carol Holmes, Seven Springs



Recently my neighbor caught a bandit in the act on their back deck.

Brady Martin, Enfield, Halifax EMC

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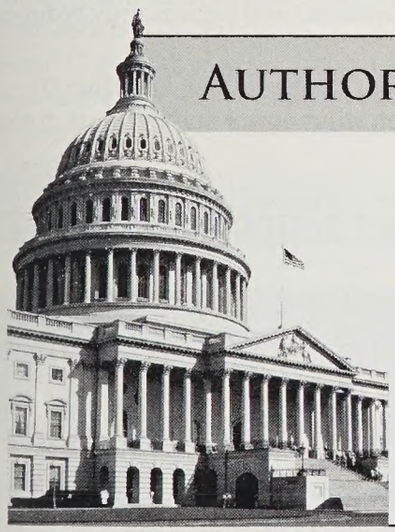
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EnergyUnited adds a Taylorsville solar farm to its renewable energy portfolio

Solar energy is now helping power homes and businesses served by electric cooperative EnergyUnited, thanks to a new photovoltaic solar farm in Taylorsville that Duke Energy Generation Services recently acquired from SunEdison.



A section of the new 1-megawatt solar power facility in Alexander County.

EnergyUnited, which serves some 120,000 member accounts in Alexander County and 19 other counties in the state, will buy all of the output from the one-megawatt solar facility under the terms of a 20-year power purchase agreement with Duke Energy Generation Services (DEGS), a Duke Energy Commercial Businesses unit. The solar farm began generating renewable power in early October 2010.

"At EnergyUnited, we're committed to helping build a clean energy future for our members," said Wayne Wilkins, CEO of the cooperative. "The solar farm, along with power produced at the Iredell County landfill, allows us to meet state requirements for renewable energy, while continuing to provide reliable energy services at competitive prices."

EnergyUnited will also receive all associated renewable energy credits (RECs) from the project. These RECs help the cooperative meet the N.C. Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Portfolio Standard requirement to obtain 10 percent of its energy from renewable resources by 2018.

The solar farm's 4,224 photovoltaic (pv) panels can generate enough electricity to power approximately 150 average-sized homes. The panels use a tracking system to follow the sun's movement during the day, which increases sunlight capture (as compared to conventional fixed-tilt systems) and significantly reduces land use requirements.

In addition to its renewable energy contracts, EnergyUnited continues to examine potential investments in hydropower, wind power and biomass projects.

Halifax Electric is cited in the Top Ten of U.S. businesses supporting the arts

Halifax Electric Membership Corporation in November was honored by Americans for the Arts and the Business Committee for the Arts as one of the 10 best companies supporting the arts in America.

Founded by David Rockefeller, the BCA annually honors those companies across the nation that it feels best exemplify the partnerships between the arts and business communities.

Halifax EMC, the electric cooperative based in Enfield and serving parts of Halifax, Warren, Martin and Nash counties in eastern North Carolina, has partnered with many arts organizations in the region to provide assistance through various means, such as volunteers, grants, sponsorships, in-kind service or whatever is needed. Halifax EMC was nominated by Lakeland Theatre Company of Littleton for sponsoring productions, and for helping to rewire the stage lighting configuration for Lakeland's new state-of-the-art computerized lighting system.



Among many contributions to regional arts, Halifax EMC helped to rewire and prepare Lakeland Theatre Company in Littleton for its state-of-the-art lighting system.

"This kind of partnership with Halifax EMC, and their support and willingness to contribute their time and money to the arts, was worthy of the kind of honor and praise they are now receiving nationally," said Wally Hurst, managing director of Lakeland Theatre Company.

The celebration was held at the Central Park Boathouse in New York City. Charles H. Guerry, executive vice president and general manager of Halifax EMC, accepted the award on behalf of the co-op. Also attending were Beverly Carter, president of the Halifax EMC Board of directors; Mr. Guerry's wife, Frances; and Wally Hurst and his wife, Maria.

Buy an Energy Star Plus manufactured home, get a $500 rebate

North Carolina buyers of Energy Star-compliant manufactured homes can get a $500 rebate in 2011 as part of a pilot project aimed at encouraging homebuyers to seek energy-efficient housing.

The "Energy Star Plus" manufactured homes may come with higher monthly mortgage payments, but they save owners on energy bills in the long run, says the N.C. State Energy Office, which rolled out the pilot program in November. Ward Lenz, director of the State Energy Office, said that on average homeowners will save about $74 per month—or $888 a year —on energy bills compared with a home of the same size that is not Energy Star-rated. The rebate program is sponsored, in part, by the State Energy Office with funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Also sponsoring the program is the North Carolina Manufactured and Modular Homebuilders Association.

North Carolina's electric cooperatives who are members of the GreenCo Solutions program are participating in the promotion.

The rebate incentive is available through participating retail dealers of manufactured houses.

Energy Star Plus homes typically have the following features:

- More insulation
- Tight construction
- Tight ducts
- Advanced windows
- High efficiency, right-sized cooling equipment
- Energy-efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs
- Constructed by certified home builder and inspected by an independent energy expert

o learn more about the program, and o find a list of participating retailers, isit the Energy Star Plus site at ww.ncenergystarplus.org.

Federal mortgage entities could benefit from the cooperative business model

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently advised Congress that restructuring the federally-controlled housing mortgage agencies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as cooperative businesses could be valuable to the American public.

The GAO—known as "the investigative arm of Congress" that helps improve the performance and accountability of the federal government—reported in November that "lenders would have financial incentives to engage in sound mortgage underwriting because, if they do not, then poorly underwritten mortgage loans sold to [the federal mortgage agencies reformed as cooperatives] could result in significant losses [that] could adversely affect the capital investments that lenders have in such cooperatives." Due to their establishment as for-profit shareholder corporations, with an implied government guarantee, the GAO said both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac took excessive risks, resulting in costs that the GAO estimates will reach $400 billion to the U.S. taxpayer.

Paul Hazen, CEO of the National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA) said, "It is very gratifying that the GAO has recognized what we have known for years: that cooperatives—through their member ownership—responsively meet market needs."

Hazen added, "Because cooperatives operate without outside stockholders, they are able to take a long-term view for the benefit of the co-op's owners and consumers. NCBA looks forward to working with the new Congress and the Administration to implement member-owned cooperative solutions for the myriad of challenges facing our economy."

Over 29,000 cooperatives operate in the U.S. in all facets of our economy, serving farmers, small businesses, healthcare, energy and childcare among others. (For a complete listing, please visit www.ncba.coop).

Piedmont EMC engineering chief helps a Bolivian co-op with substation training



Piedmont EMC's Robin Blanton (second from left) worked with a Bolivian co-op on substation design.

When asked recently by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's International Foundation to help provide some substation training in Bolivia, Robin Blanton, Piedmont EMC's manager of engineering, agreed to go.

Blanton visited nine urban and three rural substations belonging to CRE, the largest power distribution cooperative in Bolivia, with some 250,000 members, and the oldest co-op affiliated with NRECA. CRE was in the process of upgrading and renewing some 15 substations.

Based on their visits to the sites, Blanton and other volunteers offered recommendations to CRE for standardizing design features and maintenance procedures. CRE staff gained a greater understanding of the need for bypass schemes for all main breakers, Blanton says.

The approach was to keep things as simple and as standardized s possible. "Don't try to reinvent the wheel every time something new comes along," he says. "But don't be afraid to change things when it is truly necessary."

Piedmont EMC is the Touchstone Energy cooperative serving more than 31,000 member accounts in Alamance, Caswell, Durham, Granville, Orange and Person counties.

Try This!

Energy-saver boxes:

If they are too good to be true, they aren't

By Brian Sloboda

There's no shortage of hucksters pretending to help consumers save energy these days. These types of scams generally center on misstatements of science or confusion over an electric utility's energy efficiency programs.

The most popular scam right now involves a device that promises to save energy without requiring owners to make any changes in behavior or adjust the thermostat. People who sell these "little boxes" often claim outrageous energy savings—sometimes as much as 30 percent or more couched around legitimate utility terms like power conditioning, capacitors and power factor.

The marketing spiel usually goes something like this: The model being sold will control alternating current power factor and reduce electric bills. It will condition your power and make appliances last longer. It uses no power and has no moving parts. It will make motors in your home run better.

Accompanying materials often caution "your utility doesn't want you to know about this device." That last part is true—but only because these boxes are a rip-off.

The reality is while electric co-ops use various components to correct power factor for commercial and industrial consumers, power factor correction is not a concern with residential homes.

University of Texas-Austin engineers recently concluded that one of the units could produce no more than a 0.06 percent reduction in electric use in an average house.

The Electric Power Research Institute, a Palo Alto, Calif.-based non-profit research consortium, tested one of the most popular residential power factor correction products and found that it generated average savings of just 0.23 percent—far from the 30 percent claimed by its manufacturer. At that rate, it would take a typical homeowner more than 70 years to recoup his or her investment.

In short, these devices are nothing more than ordinary capacitors employed in electronic circuits to store energy or differentiate between high- and low-frequency signals. Companies selling these products change names often, and move from town to town looking for new victims.

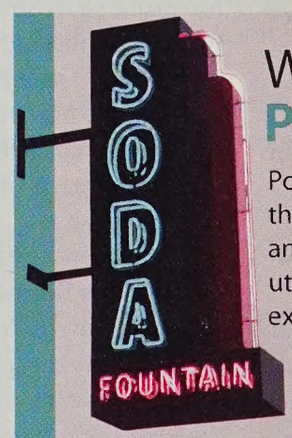
There are several questions you should ask a sales representative upon hearing or reading about the next magical cure-all:

Does the product violate the laws of science? For example, does it claim to be capable of "changing of the molecular structure…to release never-before tapped power"? (If true, the invention would quickly be sold in every store across the nation, not marketed through fliers or a poorly designed website.)

Was the product tested by an independent group? If the performance of the product was not tested and certified by a lab or entity not connected to the company selling it, be very skeptical.

How were results calculated? A video getting play on the Internet shows a consumer television reporter testing one of these little boxes. By looking at electric bills before and after installation, he concludes the device is a good buy. However, an excessively hot or unusually cool day can cause one month's electric bill to run significantly higher or lower than the previous month. Wise consumers always ask to see electric use for the same month from the previous year(s), not the previous month, and factor in weather anomalies for savings claims.

By Brian Sloboda, a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network, a service of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



What's Power Factor?

Power factor is the ratio between the electricity we use (real power) and the amount of electricity a utility provides (apparent power), expressed as a number between 0 and 1. The average home has a power factor of 0.9, or 90 percent. This means even if an electrical system isn't performing at its best (1 or 100 percent), utilities deliver extra power to make sure consumers get what they pay for. When power factors come in below 1, special equipment like capacitors are used to keep an electrical system in balance.

Real World Example:

You buy a soda for $2. The soda jerk may pour a bit extra in the glass to make sure it's full. You're not charged for any soda that spills over the rim.

Source: NRECA



Can you help others save energy?
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Why Are 30 Million Women Losing Their Hair?

The ONLY hair loss therapy designed exclusively for a woman's biochemistry offers new hope for those suffering in silence.

If you are a woman suffering from hair loss or thinning hair, you are not alone. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, more than 30 **million** American women are coping with the daily nightmare of hair loss.

That means 30 million women are facing the same stress, worry and embarrassment every time they look in the mirror or comb their hair. And these women are searching for a better way to regain a healthy head of hair and the self-confidence that comes along with it.

Clinically Proven Treatment

Today, every woman suffering from hair loss has new hope for re-growing hair and reclaiming their confidence. Finally, the researchers behind the ***International Hair Institute*** have created **Keranique**, a therapy containing the only clinically approved ingredient that will both help re-grow hair, while reserving hair loss, AND make your hair look and feel amazing so you can have the silky looking hair you have always wanted.

Keranique is Unique..and For Women ONLY

Keranique is a simple yet revolutionary technology formulated especially for women who want to restore their hair with richer, fuller volume and texture while working to end the misery of ever increasing hair loss. Keranique's methodology is designed to help women who are concerned about hair loss, thinning hair and loss of texture and body. Keranique is the results of years of research by International Hair Institute and is specifically designed to work exclusively with the biochemistry of women.

Hair Loss is Not Created Equal

For years, the discussion of women's hair loss has been taboo. While the market for products dealing with men's hair loss has exploded, women struggling with their own hair loss issues were forced to suffer alone, hiding under wigs, scarves and hats...or worse.

But the number of women suffering has become so large that even the medical community is finally acknowledging this issue and as they are seeing women with hair loss at earlier and earlier ages. The problem can no longer be ignored. That is why the ***International Hair Institute*** was created. While balding in men is accepted as almost a genetic predisposition coupled with age, in women, the leading causes of hair loss are varied. This epidemic is so vast it has been reported that 50% of all women over 50 are dealing with some form of hair loss or thinning hair!

In clinical trials, women experienced 2.7 times the hair growth using the FDA-approved ingredient in Keranique

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What Our Customers Have To Say About Keranique...

"I truly love this product. My husband, who notices nothing, keeps telling me my hair looks thicker. And I can tell my roots are getting stronger!"

Results not typical — *Jodi, MO*

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But supplies are limited so you must call today. To get your risk free trial of Keranique, for just a small shipping and processing fee call 888-310-8584. Your call is confidential and our operators are authorized to allow only one Keranique per household.

If you want to end the embarrassment of hair loss and help restore the richness and fullness to your hair you owe it to yourself to try Keranique, perhaps the greatest breakthrough in hair rejuvenation technology ever.

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KERANIQUE

Mention Promotional Code KQ100104 to find out how to get the Keranique Follicle Boosting Serum FREE

LEADING CAUSES OF FEMALE HAIR LOSS



Simulated photography

Age: 50% of women experience hair loss by 50.

Hormones: Imbalances may shrink hair follicles.

Genetics: Family history may cause hair loss.

Stress: Can lead to hormonal imbalances.

Scalp: Poor care can accelerate hair loss.

Diet: Lack of protein, iron can impede growth.

hese statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not intended to treat, diagnose, cure, mitigate or revent any disease. Consult with your doctor before starting any medication. Customer responsible for return postage.

Prices Under Pressure

The price of doing business will show up in your electric bill

By Megan McKoy–Noe



"Electric co-ops have an obligation to keep the lights on and electric bills affordable at a time when the costs for fuel and raw materials to build new generation are steadily rising."

—Glenn English, NRECA

Pressure cookers are ideal for heating liquids without reaching a boiling point. Outside influences are sealed off, and as pressure builds a liquid withstands higher and higher heat. But if you apply too much pressure the liquid explodes, popping a gasket in the process.

Electric co-ops face a similar situation. Pressures have been climbing over the last decade from new government regulations, rising fuel and materials costs, escalating demand for electricity, and required investments in both adding generation as well as upgrading existing power plants. While the current economic downturn released some steam—such as causing electric demand to dip—this break may just mark the "calm before the storm" when financial fortunes rebound and pressure builds again.

Let's lift the lid to explore different pressures impacting your electric bills:

PRESSURE POINT: Growing Electric Demand

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) predicts by 2030 residential demand for electricity will increase between 16 percent and 36 percent above 2007 levels. Historically co-op demand rises faster than the industry average—before the recession hit, electric co-op sales nationally increased by 4.4 percent while industry sales only increased by 2.6 percent between 2006 and 2007. In North Carolina, between 2006 and 2007, total electricity sales increased 4 percent. (Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration or EIA)

The EIA predicts industry demand will rebound by 5 percent in 2010 and estimates that with strong economic growth, electricity prices will jump 19 percent by 2035. However, the forecast fails to factor in added costs of complying with new federal regulations aimed at curbing emissions of greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, from power plants.

PRESSURE POINT: Added Regulation

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will begin regulating greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, this month—an action made possible by a 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision (Massachusetts v. EPA) that gave the agency a green light to impose such controls. In late 2009, EPA declared that six greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, "endanger the public health and welfare" of current and future generations.

In addition to carbon dioxide measures, the cumulative impact of new federal mandates for handling coal ash and limiting hazardous air pollutants—along with state (and perhaps federal) requirements for renewable energy generation—could become a much more expensive hurdle.

During the past 20 years, EPA has used the federal Clean Air Act to slash nationwide emissions of nitrogen oxides, which contribute to smog, by 54 percent, and cut acid rain-causing sulfur dioxide emissions by 42 percent.

That's an impressive reduction, considering electricity use rose 64 percent over the same period. However, proven technology existed to achieve those results—something not currently available for removing carbon dioxide emissions.

"The Clean Air Act as written was never designed to deal with carbon dioxide, and it could be awkward at best and probably a disaster, at worst," warns Glenn English, CEO of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

"We're entering an era where regulatory activities are going to play a more significant role in the electric industry than what happens on the legislative front," asserts Kirk Johnson, NRECA vice president of energy and environmental policy, noting Congress has debated climate change policy for more than a decade without reaching a clear consensus. "Environmental statutes that have been on the books since the 1970s, especially the Clean Air Act, are like a one-way ratchet: they only tighten."

Tighter emissions standards could have a multi-billion dollar impact on the cost of doing business for electric co-ops, adding more pressure to electric bills.

PRESSURE POINT: Need for New Power Plants

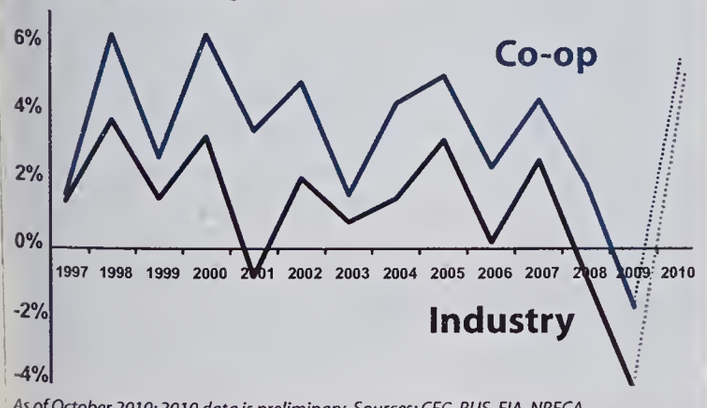
Even as new regulations are announced, utilities must be ready to make quick decisions on moving forward with power plants to meet growing electricity demand—especially since the number of operating plants may start to fall.

"Because of these new rules, we're expecting a number of current power plants to go offline and retire," predicts Johnson.

Consumer Energy Use Growth Patterns

Since 1997, electricity use by electric co-op consumers has grown faster than the electric utility industry as a whole. The drop in overall electricity consumption for 2008-09 (the result of the economic downturn, and the first decline in consecutive years since 1949) did not affect co-ops as sharply, since co-ops sell a higher percentage of their power to residential members rather than commercial and industrial accounts. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) predicts electricity use across the country will show a 5 percent rebound in 2010.

Annual Percent Change *(kilowatt-hour sales)*



As of October 2010; 2010 data is preliminary. Sources: CFC, RUS, EIA, NRECA

"The cost to comply with the rules may simply be too much."

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), which oversees the reliability of the bulk power system covering the United States and most of Canada, estimates that by 2017 peak demand for electricity will jump 135,000 megawatts (mw)—equivalent to the current amount of power used by the entire western half of the nation. Planned new generation resources will only provide another 77,000 mw, far short of the amount of energy Americans will need.

Co-ops believe that energy efficiency measures can relieve some of this pressure and delay the need for new plants. Most co-ops offer energy efficiency education. Many take this a step further: 77 percent provide residential energy audits while 49 percent offer financial incentives for members to make efficient choices. But these measures can only go so far.

"When the economy turns around, co-ops will resume growing faster than other electric utilities," says NRECA's Glenn English. "We've got to be ready for that development and have new power plants planned and largely ready to go. However, co-ops must first know how carbon dioxide and other rules could impact the price of power to make prudent decisions."

PRESSURE POINT: Cost of Materials

Every year that investments in new power plants are delayed jacks up the final price tag. Worldwide, steel prices soared 42 percent between 2009 and 2010 while costs for other construction supplies like nickel and concrete jumped as well.

Materials costs for distribution co-ops are also climbing. Prices for copper, a critical raw material used for wire and to ground electrical equipment, reached a 27-month high at the end of 2010. Between 1990 and 2010 in the north-central part of the nation the price tag on utility poles, towers and fixtures skyrocketed 98 percent while line transformers spiked 154 percent.

"Electric co-ops have an obligation to keep the lights on and electric bills affordable at a time when the costs for fuel and raw materials to build new generation are steadily rising," acknowledges English. "Combined with costs of additional regulatory compliance, these are just some of the pressure points that will affect electric bills in years to come—all of which are largely beyond the control of local co-ops."

(Sources: U.S. Energy Information Administration 2009 Annual Energy Outlook, North American Electric Reliability Corporation 2010 Special Reliability Scenario Assessment, Cooperative Research Network. Handy-Whitman Index of Public Construction Costs, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Steel Market Update)

Megan McKoy-Noe, CCC, writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives. NRECA's Steve Johnson contributed to this article.



N.C. Department of Tourism

Before you drive around or fly over the North Carolina mountains for winter sports elsewhere, take at look at what your state's mountains offer for a place to plant your ski poles, ride your snowboard or join a snow tubing race this winter—you'll be pleasantly surprised.

Snowfall in our mountains began in November 2010, and all the resorts opened with high hopes of another crowd-pleasing year. The North Carolina mountains have the highest elevation and coldest climates in the South, so if Mother Nature isn't cooperating (the average yearly snowfall is 60 inches), the ski areas have the latest snowmaking capabilities to cover 100 percent of the slopes. Last year's snowfall and made snow combined for 100-plus inches of base in most of the state's ski areas.

The ski season usually lasts until late March or early April, depending on conditions. North Carolina ski areas offer ski and snowboarding acreage, snow tubing, ice skating, even snowshoeing and zip lines. The best part? Enjoying a day or weekend of winter fun within driving range.

—Renee Gannon

❄ ❄ ❄

Appalachian Ski Mountain

Blowing Rock
www.appskimtn.com
(800) 322-2373

STATS

PEAK ELEVATION: 4,000 ft.

VERTICAL DROP: 365 ft.

BASE ELEVATION: 3,635 ft.

LONGEST RUN: 2,640 ft. (½ mile)

12 TRAILS (3 easiest, 6 more difficult, 3 most difficult, 3 freestyle)

LIFTS: 2 quads, 1 double, 2 carpet conveyors, 1 handle pull

Equipment and clothing rentals available

First opened in 1962, Appalachian Ski Mountain features the French Swiss Ski College, the South's largest independent ski school, and SKIwee. For snowboarders, Appalachian Ski Mountain has the state's only Burton Learn to Ride Center. Offers three terrain parks and a refrigerated outdoor ice skating rink. The trails and terrain parks are lighted for night skiing and Midnight Blast weekends.

Beech Mountain Resort

Beech Mountain
www.skibeech.com
(800) 438-2093

STATS

PEAK ELEVATION: 5,506 ft.

VERTICAL DROP: 830 ft.

BASE ELEVATION: 4,675 ft.

LONGEST RUN: 5,280 ft. (1 mile)

15 TRAILS (2 easiest, 7 more difficult, 4 most difficult, 2 freestyle)

LIFTS: 1 high-speed quad, 1 fixed-grip quad, 5 doubles, 1 J-bar, 2 handle pulls

Equipment and clothing rentals available

At 5,506 feet in elevation, Ski Beech remains the highest ski area in the East. The high-speed quad list is the only one in the area that offers a panoramic vista of the mountains. Ski Beech also offers two terrain parks for skiing and snowboarding, snow tubing, and skating on an outdoor ice rink. A large area of skiable acreage, including a terrain park, is lighted for night skiing. Certified skiing and snowboarding instructions are available for all ability levels, and also a program for youths that includes equipment rental.

Cataloochee Ski Area

Maggie Valley
www.cataloochee.com
(800) 768-0285

STATS

PEAK ELEVATION: 5,400 ft.

VERTICAL DROP: 740 ft.

BASE ELEVATION: 4,660 ft.

LONGEST RUN: 3,500 ft.

16 TRAILS (4 easiest, 8 more difficult, 4 most difficult)

LIFTS: 1 double, 1 triple, 1 quad, 3 carpet conveyors

Equipment and clothing rentals available

Cataloochee is one of the first ski areas to open on the East Coast each winter and offers a certified Snowsports School for all ages and abilities. The resort also features snow tubing and two terrain parks. All 16 trails are lighted for night skiing.

Hawksnest Resort

Seven Devils
www.hawksnest-resort.com
Lifts: 2 carpet conveyors
(800) 822-4295

Hawksnest offers tubing and zip lining. Recognized for having the largest snow tubing park on the East Coast with 20 lanes, the resort added the longest zip line tour as well at 1½ miles, featuring 10 cables, two of which are known in the zip line industry as super or mega zips. In winter, zippers fly over the tubing lanes.

Sapphire Valley Ski Resort

Sapphire
www.skisapphire.com
(828) 743-7663

STATS

Peak Elevation: 4,300 ft.

Vertical Drop: 200 ft.

Base Elevation: 4,100 ft.

Longest Run: 1,100 ft.

2 Trails (1 easiest, 1harder)

Lifts: 1 double, 1 rope tow

Equipment rentals available

Sapphire Valley Ski Resort is the state's southernmost ski destination. The resort also offers skiing, snowboarding and tubing, as well as a snow cub camp for kids. Built last year, the Frozen Falls Tube Park features 500 feet of frozen fun and a 60-foot vertical drop.

Sugar Mountain Resort

Banner Elk
www.skisugar.com
(800) SUGARMT (800-784-2768)

STATS

PEAK ELEVATION: 5,300 ft.

VERTICAL DROP: 1,200 ft.

BASE ELEVATION: 4,100 ft.

LONGEST RUN: 7,920 ft. (1½ miles)

20 TRAILS (4 easiest, 8 more difficult, 8 most difficult)

LIFTS: 1 triple, 4 doubles, 2 surface

Equipment rentals available

Sugar Mountain Resort opened in 1969 with four lifts and 11 slopes for skiing; and now has seven lifts, 20 slopes for skiers and snowboarders and a terrain park, available day and night. It boasts the longest trail run in the state, at 1½ miles. Sugar also offers guided snowshoeing tours, tubing and a refrigerated outdoor ice skating rink. The resort's certified ski and snowboard schools accommodate all ages and abilities.

Wolf Ridge Ski Resort

Mars Hill
www.skiwolfridgenc.com
(800) 817-4111

STATS

PEAK ELEVATION: 4,700 ft.

VERTICAL DROP: 700 ft.

BASE ELEVATION: 4,000 ft.

LONGEST RUN: about 5,280 ft. (1 mile)

23 TRAILS (13 easiest, 8 more difficult, 3 most difficult)

3 LIFTS: 2 quads, 2 doubles, 4 surface

Equipment rentals available

Formerly Wolf Laurel Slopes, the resort offers something for everyone, from beginner to expert. Snow Sports School offers lessons in skiing, telemark skiing and snowboarding, while the Wolf Cub program helps kids learn and enjoy the snow. Night skiing and snowboarding are available on all trails. Skiers and snowboarders also have a tunnel run and a terrain park. The resort offers tubing at Wolf Ridge Tubing.



Opposite page: *Sugar Mountain Resort is just one of seven N.C. destinations for families looking for winter activities.*

Right: *Appalachian Ski Mountain provides one of the best snowboarding venues in the South.*





Todd Bush

For more information:
www.goskinc.com
www.skinorthcarolina.com
www.visitnc.com



Find out the N.C. mountain weather before heading to the slopes at www.raysweather.com



Above right: *Sugar Mountain Resort's black diamond trails offer spice for any advanced skier.*

Above left: *Hawksnest Resort offers a 20-lane tubing park and a year-round zip line course.*

Above left: *Beech Mountain Resort boasts the highest ski elevation on the East coast.*

Left: *Cataloochee Ski offers skiing and snowboarding in the Great Smoky Mountains.*

WHERE IN CAROLINA COUNTRY IS THIS?



This is a Carolina Country scene in Touchstone Energy territory. If you know where it is, send your answer by Jan. 7 with your name, address and the name of your electric cooperative.

By e-mail: where@carolinacountry.com

Or by mail: Where in Carolina Country?
P.O. Box 27306
Raleigh, NC 27611

The winner, chosen at random and announced in our February issue, will receive $25.

December winner

The December photo by Renee Gannon was somewhat of a trick photo. The dancing or kissing pigs originally lived in uptown Lexington about five years ago as part of that town's Pigs in the City art project. But they moved to their current location here in Lilesville, Anson County. They are at The Old Store, owned by Joy Hildreth on Pit Rd. near Hwy. 74. Teresa Morton of Lilesville told us they have great food and "the best fried pickles" at this place. Sharon Everette of Bladen County also likes the store and has a photo of it on her cell phone from when she visited her daughter in Indian Trail. The winner, chosen at random from all correct answers, is Megan Poe of Lilesville, a member of Pee Dee EMC.



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These healthful potatoes are sweet, indeed

Weight loss is perennially one of the top New Year's resolutions among Americans, but achieving this goal can be difficult when faced with strict diets and bland food. The key to weight loss is enjoying healthful meals that are tasty and sustaining.

When baked plain and allowed to caramelize naturally without the sugary toppings we're accustomed to, sweet potatoes are a nutrition powerhouse. A medium-sized cooked sweet potato is an excellent source of vitamins A and C, a good source of fiber and only about 100 calories. Luckily, these rewarding roots are available year-round (with North Carolina producing nearly half of the country's supply).

Fiber plays an important role in maintaining weight by slowing down the digestion of food. The longer it takes your food to digest, the longer you'll stay full and the less snacking you'll do before your next meal. This slow digestion also makes sweet potatoes a low- to medium- glycemic food, so even those with diabetes can enjoy a touch of natural sweetness without causing blood sugar levels to spike.

Speedier cooking methods

Baking sweet potatoes with the skin on at a low 375-degree F for 35 minutes will produce a caramelized skin with a sweet fluffy center. But if you're short on time, here are speedier ways to cook them:

Sauté: cook and stir sliced or diced sweet potatoes in hot oil for about 10 minutes

Boil: cook 1-inch thick slices in 2 inches of boiling water for about 12 minutes

Speed-bake: cook whole sweet potatoes in microwave for 4 minutes, then bake at 450 degrees F for 5 to 10 minutes

This Sweet Potato Turkey Burgers recipe is a great alternative to the typical high-calorie, beef hamburger. For lighter alternative, skip the bun and place the patty over a bed of greens with avocado slices and your favorite salad dressing.

Source: Family Features.com

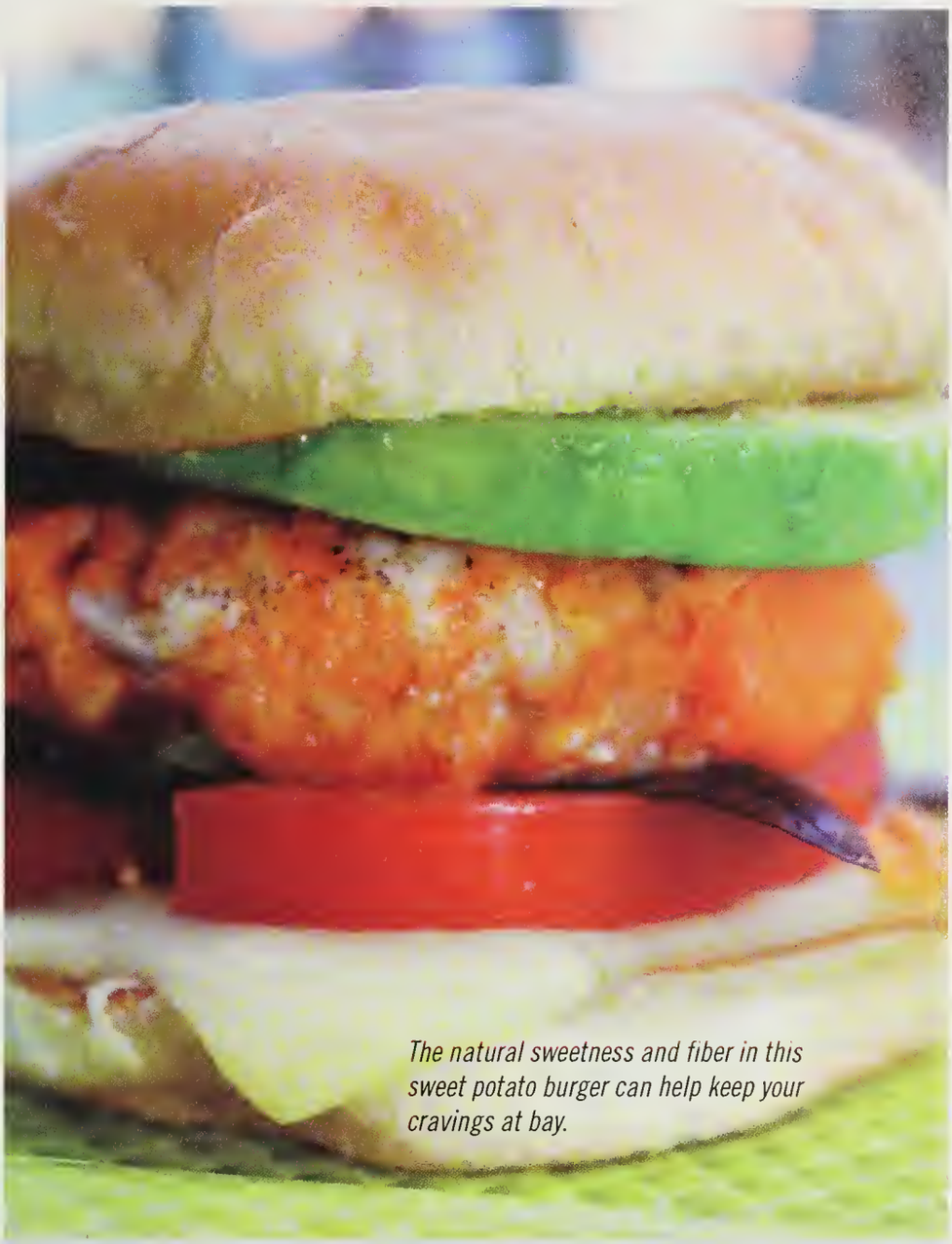


Photo Courtesy of Laura Curtis

The natural sweetness and fiber in this sweet potato burger can help keep your cravings at bay.

Sweet Potato Turkey Burgers

(Recipe adapted from "The Bicycle Chef" blog by Laura Curtis)

- 2 cups mashed sweet potato (about 1 pound)
- 1 package ground turkey (about 1¼ pound)
- ½ cup finely diced red onion
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¾ teaspoon ground cumin
- Oil for sautéing

In small pan over medium heat, heat 1 teaspoon oil. Add diced onion; cook and stir until slightly soft, about 1 minute; set aside. In large bowl, mash together sweet potatoes, turkey, salt, cumin and the reserved onion. Form eight 4- to 5-ounce patties. In large pan over medium heat, heat oil; cook until cooked through, about 5 minutes per side. Assemble burgers with your choice of toppings.

Yield: 8 burgers

Per serving: 161 cal., 18g protein, 16g carb., 2g fiber, 5g sugar, 3g total fat (0.4g sat. fat)
Diabetic exchanges: 0.8 starch, 0.3 fat, 0.2 vegetable, 1.7 lean meat

Debunking myths about credit scores

By Lisa Hughes-Daniel

With tightening of borrowing standards and the importance of personal credit these days, people are increasingly motivated to improve their credit scores.

Having a good credit score can pay off in many ways. Credit scores indicate to lenders how "risky" you are, so a higher score can make mortgages, loans and credit cards easier to obtain and cost less in the form of lower interest rates. That saves you trouble, and money in the long run.

Here are a few popular misconceptions—and the facts—about what can help and hurt your score:

"To help your score, close credit accounts."

False. Paying down debt is great for your credit history, but closing accounts or canceling credit cards once they're paid off can actually hurt. Why? First, having a few open accounts in good standing (meaning, paid off each month) demonstrates responsible use of credit. Also, using a large percentage of your available credit can lower your score. Here's an example: You have three credit cards, each with a $3,000 limit. One card has a $3,000 balance, the other two are paid off. If you keep all the accounts open, you're using only 33 percent of your available credit. If you cancel the two paid-off cards, you're maxed out.

Check your reports for free

You can review your credit reports for any mistakes for free, once a year, at www.annualcreditreport.com. To learn more about how credit scores work, visit the Federal Trade Commission website at www.ftc.gov.

"Shopping for a loan damages your credit."

False. While it's true that inquiries from creditors can shave a few points off your score, credit agencies realize that responsible consumers shop around—and that not all requests are equal. According to Fair Isaac Corporation, which issues FICO credit scores, the "score ignores mortgage, auto, and student loan inquiries made in the 30 days prior to scoring." Going back further, multiple similar inquiries in a "typical shopping period"—usually 14 days—are treated as one.

"Credit counseling will hurt your score."

False—technically. While evidence of some types of credit counseling might be visible on your report, it doesn't affect your numerical score. Some creditors, however, may still be wary of signs that your credit is in trouble. What can also happen: If you enter a debt management program that isn't completely squared away, payments made on your behalf to creditors may be sent late. These late payments will hurt your credit score.

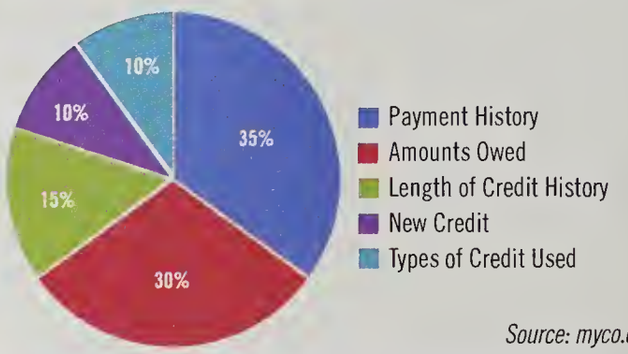


"You can pay someone to fix your credit."

True—but remember two caveats. One: Only incorrect information can be "cleaned up" on your credit report. If you truly paid bills late three times last year, that fact can't be wiped out. Two: You can dispute incorrect information on your own, for free. All three major credit reporting agencies—Equifax, Experian and TransUnion—offer online services for disputing inaccurate information.

How a FICO Score Breaks Down

FICO Scores are calculated from a lot of different credit data in your credit report. This data can be grouped into five categories as outlined below. The percentages in the chart reflect how important each of the categories is in determining your FICO score.



Source: myco.com

What, another score?

Although FICO scores have been the industry standard for decades, a competitor has entered the market: VantageScore. Created by the three major credit reporting agencies, VantageScore uses a different scale—501–990, versus FICO's 300–850 range—and a different formula. Some lenders are already using the new score. For details, visit www.vantagescore.com.

Lisa Hughes-Daniel is a marketing communications consultant who writes for the Insurance & Financial Services Department of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in Arlington, Va.

Humidifiers can cut bills and increase comfort

By James Dulley

By properly humidifying the air, you can feel comfortable at a lower room temperature, saving much more energy than the humidifier uses.

Properly humidified indoor air is not only comfortable and healthy for your family, but it can reduce your winter heating bills. Room humidifiers typically use less energy than a 100-watt light bulb. Many models have built-in humidistats that automatically switch the unit on and off, so they consume even less electricity than listed on the unit's nameplate.

There is a cooling effect when the water from the humidifier evaporates, so running the humidifier will actually cool a room's air slightly. This is the same evaporation process (perspiration) of moisture from your skin that makes you feel cool as water changes state from liquid to vapor. However, the heat generated from the humidifier's electricity usage offsets the slight cooling effect.

Just like sweating outdoors on a low-humidity day makes you feel cool, the same process occurs indoors in dry air. The amount of moisture evaporation from your skin is greater when the indoor air is excessively dry, so you may actually feel chilly even though the indoor air temperature is high enough. The evaporation of your skin's moisture can also dry your skin, make you itch and irritate sinuses.

Running a humidifier helps you save energy by reducing the chilling effect of your skin's moisture evaporating. By properly humidifying the air, you can feel comfortable at a lower room temperature, saving much more energy than the humidifier uses.

The proper type of room humidifier depends on your family's needs and your house size and room layout. One or two room humidifiers are generally enough for a reasonably airtight, energy-efficient home. Leaky houses may need more or larger-capacity models. Cooking, bathing, washing clothes and dishes add moisture to the room air. (They may add too much in some rooms, such as bathrooms.)

Options available

For daytime use, an evaporative type of humidifier is effective and the least expensive to buy. These humidifiers use a wick material that has one end submerged in a water reservoir. It naturally draws up water from the reservoir. There is a fan inside that draws room air through the wick where it evaporates into the air stream.

Evaporative humidifiers are easy to keep clean, which is important to minimize mold and microbe growth in the wick. Some wicks are treated with an antimicrobial substance. Evaporative models usually have a three-speed fan. The high speed can be noisy, so this may not the best option for a bedroom. The low-speed setting on some models is quiet enough not to interrupt sleep.



Kaz

The room air flows through a wet wick inside this evaporative humidifier to add moisture to the air.

If your children tend to get colds, a warm mist humidifier would be a good bedroom choice. These models boil water to create water vapor. The steam is mixed with room air before it comes out, so it is not too hot. Germ-free models include a UV (ultraviolet) light purifier chamber to further sanitize the flowing air. These use about 260 watts of electricity.

Another design uses ultrasonic waves to create water vapor mist. These are the most energy efficient, using about 50 watts of electricity. A very quiet fan blows the mist.

Resources

The following companies offer freestanding humidifiers:

Essick Air, (800) 547-3888
www.essickair.com

Holmes, (800) 546-5637
www.holmesproducts.com

Hunter Fan, (800) 448-6837
www.hunterfan.com

Kaz, (800) 477-0457
www.kaz.com

Lasko Products, (800) 233-0268
www.laskoproducts.com

Have a question for Jim?
Send inquiries to:
James Dulley, Carolina Country,
6906 Royalgreen Dr.,
Cincinnati, OH 45244
www.dulley.com

RINGING IN A HEALTHIER 2011 How to fight winter weight gain

When the cold weather sets in, it's natural to want to avoid the chill by lounging inside the house. Unfortunately, staying cooped up can lead to inactivity and indulging in unhealthy comfort foods. Amy Hendel, a nutritionist and author of "The 4 Habits of Healthy Families," offers these tips to help you avoid or shed winter weight.

Plan, prepare, portion, play

Plan your menus and prepare snacks and meals ahead of time so you are less likely to slip up. Portion control is also important, so when you're examining what's on your plate, use visual cues to help you. For example, three to four ounces of protein is about the size of a deck of cards. Finally, playing (not video games, but physical activity) will not only help with weight management, but it will improve your mood.

Count it out

Be vigilant about the amount of unhealthy snacks you consume during the colder months and make modifications accordingly. If you are having trouble cutting out the snacks, limit the amount you eat by keeping smaller portions of them in individual bags. Try finding alternatives to snack foods, such as dried fruit, yogurt and hummus. Keeping fruits and vegetables precut and easily accessible in the fridge will make you more likely to reach for them when hunger strikes.

Five rules for food choices

1. Don't think of eating as a bad thing and starving as a good thing. Food is fuel that gives your body energy.

2. Some foods are healthier than others, and we should eat those foods more often—but no one eats healthy food 100 percent of the time. An indulgence every now and then isn't the end of the world.

3. Food choices are individual. What works for one person, may not work for another. We all have different foods that we like and don't like.

4. Even a little bit of improvement is better than none.

5. Making good food choices isn't a short-term plan; it's a lifetime plan.







Drinking water and exercising are key ways to stave off extra pounds.

Play the "Yes, No, Maybe So" game

Know which category your food choices fall into. Fruits and vegetables are "Yes" foods because they are nutrient-dense, have lots of vitamins and fill you up and not out. "Maybe So" foods such as grains, beans and legumes, olive oil, almonds, dark chocolate and healthy fats like those found in fish should be eaten in moderation. The "No" foods tend to be high in calories and low in nutrients and include desserts, soda and sugary juices, white grains, high-fat meat and dairy products and many processed foods.

Stay hydrated

Drinking more water can lead to weight loss. Consider investing in a water filter or a pitcher such as the Filtrete water pitcher, which reportedly filters and fills five times faster than traditional filtering water pitchers.

Indoor sports

Try to exercise for 45 minutes to an hour per day. If stormy weather is preventing you from getting out of the house, exercise inside as a family: climb stairs for a cardio workout, create an obstacle course in the living room, or simply play an active game, such as freeze dance or indoor volleyball with balloons. Practicing yoga, martial arts and Pilates are also good choices.

Source: Family Features.com

N.C. resources

NC Health Info (www.nchealthinfo.org) is an online guide offering state-specific resources as well as more general public information. Its Healthy Living section (within the Public Health and Wellness section) has links to adult and children body mass index calculators, and points the way to many North Carolina organizations that help folks become and stay well.











Wendy's SNOW CREAM

By Wendy Perry

As a little girl, I have fond memories of my Mama, the "non-cook," stirring up batches of this winter treat. Mama would not let us make snow cream with the first snow of the year, because she always said that was dirty snow that had "cleaned the air." Of course I think that's as silly now as I did way back then, but Mama knew best.

My recipe isn't far from what Mama made, but she mostly used just canned milk. Having learned over time that condensed milk makes everything better, I started adding that to my snow cream along with the canned evaporated milk. If I happen to have some Half & Half at the time of snow, I'll use that instead of canned milk.

I hope you enjoy this as much as I do. And although I don't really love the snow as I did as a child, I do enjoy a good snowfall every season, just so I can make some snow cream!

Wendy Perry is a personal chef and marketing home economist who offers in-home meal preparations, dinner parties, private or group cooking classes and parties, kitchen and pantry organization (for existing messes that need to become "FUNctional" or new home kitchen set up). She lives in Zebulon. Learn more at www.WendyPerry.com.

Wendy's Creamy Snow Cream

Make this nectar in a jar so you can make just small batches of snow cream at a time. Keep the jar out in the snow until you need another cup.



- Exact measurements are not important, but the measurements here will help you get started.
- Start with a big (24-ounce) Mason jar, a can (14-ounce) of condensed milk, vanilla, sugar and a can (12-ounce) of evaporated milk or a pint of Half & Half.
- Gather bowl of fluffy snow (icy snow won't do).
- Pour condensed milk into the big jar along with a can of evaporated milk or equal amount (about 1½ cups) of Half & Half.
- Add in a capful of vanilla (or more to taste).
- Add a little sugar (maybe two tablespoons to start, then taste).
- Put the lid on and shake, shake, shake!
- Put a few scoops of snow into a bowl or cup. Pour a little of the cream at a time over fluffy snow.
- Add more cream and stir until it is as thick or thin as you like it. I like mine custardy and thick enough to eat with a spoon. But it's just as dang good if thinner and sippable.

Optional: Drizzle with chocolate syrup or top with strawberries, bananas or your favorite fruit for a snow cream sundae!

I Remember...



We guessed my aunt was 80 years old when she first celebrated her birthday. She didn't have a birth certificate, nor was her birth recorded in the family bible.

My Aunt's Birthday Party

When I decided to have a birthday party for my Aunt Mary, we figured she was about 80 based on her sisters' ages. We set the date as August 8, which was the birthday of her youngest great-niece, who was named after her. I invited her brothers, sisters and closest friends.

She told about going on a buggy ride with a young man. The horse got spooked and away he ran with buggy attached. The buggy fell over and she fell out. That was the last time she got into a buggy.



She said she had her chance at marriage and told of a man coming in a buggy to the cotton field to ask, "Will you have me?" She told him, "No, I won't have you or any other man." She wanted no part of him or his buggy.

She had a wonderful time at the party. Thereafter, we celebrated her birthday on August 8, which is the date of birth etched on her tombstone.

Monnie Sullivan, Lillington, South River

Mama dancing the flatfoot

The sound of heels and toes clickety-clacking against an aging wooden board to the rhythm of an old-time fiddle and guitar was the music of my Mama. Mama was the youngest of nine children who all worked daily in the tobacco fields to come home and spend time with family in the backyard. Flat-footing was a time of release and good old-fashioned fun after a long, hard day.

As a child, I remembering listening to "Rocky Top" and watching through bright eyes as Mama's feet flew across the linoleum in the middle of our kitchen. I would join her, trying to imitate her movements and listen to her tips: "Stay on your toes and kick up those heels!" In the middle of the kitchen floor or out in the backyard, she grabs my hand to pull me to the middle of the floor, gives me that mischievous smile as if she is stealing the dance, and our heels kick up a dizzying fury of dust, swirling between our laughter and whines from the fiddle.

It took me nearly my entire 26 years to come anything close to her out there on the ply-board at the Autumn Leaves Festival in Mount Airy, but it's a legacy I'll pass on to my kids one day.

Keisha Gordon Proctor, Huntersville, EnergyUnited



This is my grandmother (in the back row) on the back porch after a day in the fields, with my Aunt Ethel (on the ladder) and my mom, Janice Goins Gordon (at Aunt Ethel's knees on the ladder). Mom learned to flatfoot in that backyard with her sisters.

SEND US YOUR *Memories*

We'll pay $50 for those we publish in the magazine. We can put even more on our Internet sites, but can't pay for them. (If you don't want them on the Internet, let us know.)

Guidelines:

1. Approximately 200 words.
2. Digital photos must be at least 600kb or 1200 by 800 pixels.
3. No deadline, but only one entry per household per month.
4. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want yours returned.
5. We pay $50 for each one published in the magazine. We retain reprint rights.
6. Include your name, mailing address and the name of your electric cooperative.
7. **E-mail:** iremember@carolinacountry.com **Or by U.S. mail:** I Remember, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616

Rice Krispies Treats

It has been said that "Some of life's greatest lessons are learned in the kitchen." During my growing up years at home, my mother always included my brother and me in her kitchen endeavors. Whether she was allowing us to the test the spaghetti noodles to see if they were thoroughly cooked or add the paprika to her famous deviled eggs, she made us feel a part of something special.

One of our favorite things to make with mom was Rice Krispies Treats. I was always so excited when the process of mixing started. But when it was my turn to stir all that yummy, gooey goodness and my arms became weak from exhaustion, I would begin to regret my initial enthusiasm.

But it did not matter what concoction was being made. We were learning lessons about time with family and the value of simple communication with one another. The conversations we had over the kitchen counter have shaped and molded my brother and me into who we are today. One batch of Rice Krispie Treats at a time, my mother was growing us into strong individuals, and I am forever grateful for those precious moments we shared.

Elizabeth (Rice) Kidd, Huntersville, EnergyUnited



I am the shy little blonde girl along with fellow visitors and Miss Melissa at Romper Room.

Our Romper Room

If you are old enough to remember when Channel 5 Television was located in a small brick building across the street from Pullen Park in Raleigh, then you probably remember Romper Room and Paul Montgomery, Mr. Music.

While I was a very quiet little girl, this place somehow made me feel a bit more bold. I remember us saying the Pledge of Allegiance as we are doing in this picture, parading around in a circle playing hand instruments. I will never forget when one of the boys had the pleasure of being chosen to drive the mini Long Meadow milk truck for our snack.

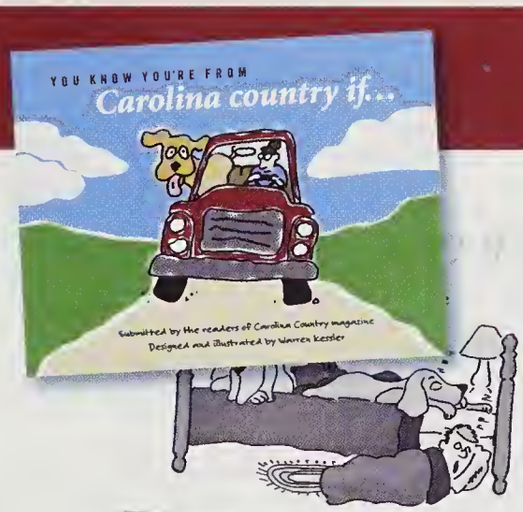
My how things have changed in 50-plus years.

Karen Watts, Wake Forest, Wake EMC

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UNNATURAL RESOURCES

Promoting creative reuse of materials in eastern North Carolina

By Karen Olson House

Back when Jacqueline Ponder was a PTA science coordinator, she was hard-pressed using only parents' donations to get equipment for 530 students at Elmhurst Elementary, Greenville. One day while tidying a storage room, she found instructions for building a battery from a potato. Intrigued, she rummaged until she found the required supplies. Her husband, George, was later called in to help, and when the battery's tiny light bulb finally shone, a bigger light bulb went off in Jacqueline's head. From then on, she has passionately pushed the creative reuse of "so-called trash."

Jacqueline's enlightening experience eventually led to an advocacy institute and a popular competition fair. This year's fair, which showcases adults' and children's' creations from reused items, is Feb. 4–6 (see sidebar). Entries must be at least 80 percent recycled from "unnatural resources," Jacqueline's catchphrase for materials that have been somehow changed by people and used at least once or are leftover scraps from a larger project.

The fair

Jacqueline's first reuse contest in 1992 at the Elmhurst school, dubbed "The Unnatural Resources Fair," was a hit, so she traveled to other Pitt County schools with a custom demonstration. With the help of PTA Council members Connie Bond and Jan Folsom and others, the first county-wide Unnatural Resources Fair was held in 1993 at Ayden Arts and Recreation, a recycled school building. At least 10 schools participated. Next year, the Carolina East Mall manager wanted an environmental event and the event was held there. The fair moved to the roomier convention center in 2006. Last year's fair boasted more than 400 entries, with at least 30 schools participating.

Unnatural Resources Institute

This non-profit organization, which Jacqueline, 66, founded and heads, puts on the fair, aided by volunteers and sponsors. In a nutshell, the institute's mission is to promote and inspire creative and different ways to reuse materials. It offers demonstrations and workshops and provides a free, 37-page workbook online for holding reuse events. The fair doesn't require admission or entry fees, because "we want everyone to be able to come," Jacqueline explains. The institute operates from fair donations, vendor fees and a community yard sale's proceeds held at Pitt County Agricultural Center each fall.

> **In the beginning when we would ask a child, "What do you do when a button falls off your shirt?" they'd say, "Throw it away, go to the mall, buy a new one."**
>
> —Jacqueline Ponder



The endeavor has taken over much of the Ponders' 3,700-square-foot house and garage in Greenville. Besides using it as an office, they also make project examples and keep equipment there. The institute also rents a warehouse. George Ponder builds necessities such as hanging rods. "If I didn't have him, we wouldn't have the fair," Jacqueline says. The couple's two daughters, 28 and 30, also assist.

A growing endeavor

The first fair had categories for Math, Science, Music, Art, PE, Home Use, and Miscellaneous, but Jacqueline has added more, such as Social Studies/History, to encourage civilization displays. There is also a Boy Scout and Girl Scout badge. The former home economics teacher is quick, however, to emphasize that adult entries are welcome. The fair opened to seniors in 2003 and now anyone with a creative idea who lives east of I-95 can enter. (Fair vendors can be from anywhere in the state.)

"What we'd like to do is get the whole family involved," Jacqueline says.

Historically, artists—starving or otherwise—have always turned trash to treasure. Some artists who enter the fair already have a business, while others have begun new enterprises as a result.

Conservation may be hot today, but it wasn't always so. "More people are interested in reusing materials now than they were in 1992 when we started with our first little project," Jacqueline says. "In fact, back then, a lot of people thought I was out of my tree. People weren't reusing things like they did in old days. They had just quit."

She enjoys seeing children learn the value of reuse. "In the beginning when we would ask a child, 'What do you do when a button falls off your shirt?' they'd say 'Throw it away, go to the mall, buy a new one.'" Today, she remains happily "surprised as what kids come up with… It doesn't cost parents any or much money, and they have hours and hours of fun."

Her fair favorites have included a hammock made from six-pack rings and a floor-sweeping robot. She especially appreciates electrical projects, such as geo boards that light up for correct answers, because entrants have

to know something about electricity to make them. (Projects must be safe and battery-operational for demonstration.) Judges award trophies and ribbons Sunday, the last fair day.

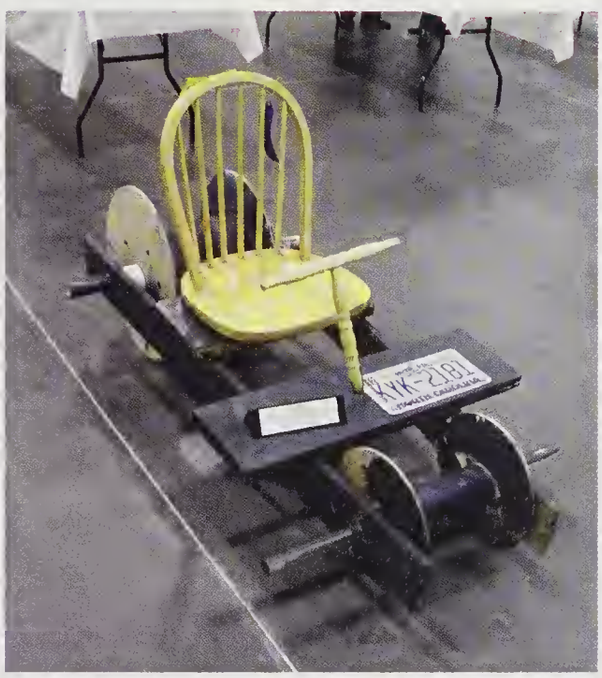
Jacqueline reminds us of one reason to reuse materials: so we and future generations don't have to pull them back out of landfills later. "People are already mining landfills for certain items such as tires," she points out. She believes the fair is a great way to educate people, and it has stimulated many imaginations to boot. "It's really fun to participate in, and it's a 21st century event."

Unnatural Resources Fair

- **WHEN:** Friday–Sunday, Feb. 4–6. Friday, 9 a.m.–8 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.–6 p.m.; Sunday, 1–4 p.m.
- **WHERE:** Greenville Convention Center
- **COST:** Free. Donations accepted.
- **QUALIFICATIONS:** Entrants must live east of I-95, but can be anywhere from kindergarten age to senior citizen. Age groups are judged separately.
- **DEADLINE:** Entrants should let Jacqueline know by Wednesday, Jan. 26, they will be submitting a project. Projects don't have to be finished until fair time.

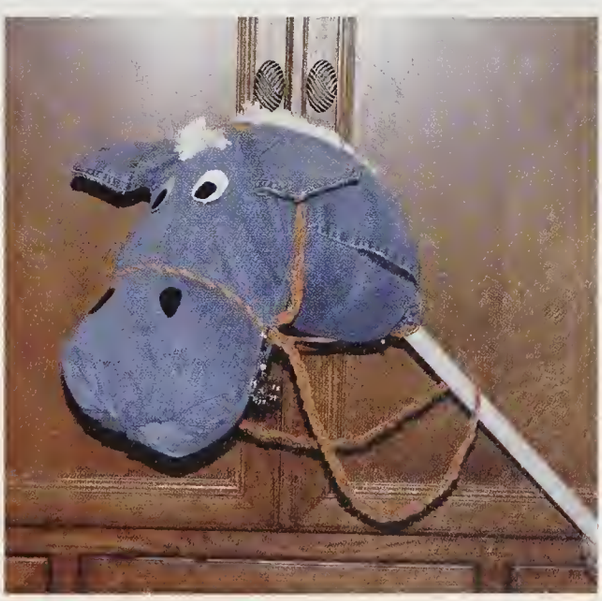
Visit www.unnaturalresources.org for other rules, or call Jacqueline at (252) 355-1039.













Past projects have included (clockwise from top): Giant eyeglasses (made from papier-mâché); a bird house (from a coffee can, used broom and used lampshade); a ukulele (from a ham can, scrap wood, and used musical strings); an extraterrestrial can of worms (from a cardboard cylinder, coat hangers, leftover paint and a pillow); a stick playhorse (from used jeans, a broom stick, scrap leather, used key chains, scrap fringe and felt); and a go-kart (from a broken chair, tire wheels and wood).

All Photos courtesy of Unnatural Resources Institute.

January Events



View an exhibition of Bill Ward's photography at Carteret General Hospital's art gallery in Morehead City through January. Call (252) 728-9060 or visit www.fishhouseproductions.com to learn more.

ONGOING

Arts Councils' Fourth Friday
Fayetteville
(910) 483-5311
www.theartscouncil.org

Street Dance
Monday nights
Hendersonville
(828) 693-9708
www.historichendersonville.org

Maness Pottery & Music Barn
Dinner, music, fellowship
Tuesday nights
Midway
(910) 948-4897
www.liveatclydes.com

Free Uptown Chamber Music Concerts
First Tuesdays monthly
Through May, Charlotte
(704) 335-0009
www.charlottechambermusic.org

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Through Jan. 2, Chapel Hill
(888) 878-1823
www.carolinainn.com

"12 x 12 by 21"
Small works by member artists
Hillsborough
Jan. 10–Feb. 20
(919) 732-5001
www.hillsboroughgallery.com

Bill Ward Photography
Through January, Morehead City
(252) 728-9060
www.fishhouseproductions.com

"Family Connections"
Tours of Iredell House & Cupola House
Through January, Edenton
(353) 482-2637
www.edenton.nchistoricsites.org

Emissaries of Peace: The 1762 Cherokee & British Delegations
Through May 15, Asheville
(828) 665-2492
www.ncarboretum.org

"Motoring the Blue Ridge Parkway"
Through June, Maggie Valley
(828) 926-6266
www.wheelsthroughtime.com

1 | SAT.

Penguin Plunge
Benefit for Carteret County charities
Atlantic Beach
(252) 247-3826
www.penguin-plunge.org

7 | FRI.

Quilting & Fiber Art Marketplace
Jan. 7–8, Sanford
(704) 864-4894
www.quiltersgallery.net

8 | SAT.

Elvis' Birthday Celebration
Concert with impersonators
Albemarle
(704) 986-3666
www.stanlyciviccenter.com

12th Night Madrigal Dinner
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Cary
(919) 319-4560

Contra Dance
Greenville
(252) 329-4200
www.ecu.edu/org/ecufolk/fasg

Miniature Wigwam Workshop
Jan. 8, Raleigh
(919) 807-7900
www.ncmuseumofhistory.org

Civil War Winter Quarters
Jan. 8–9, Huntersville
(704) 875-2312
www.lattaplantation.org

13 | THURS.

Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival
Jan. 13–14, Greenville
(800) 328-2787
www.ecuarts.com

14 | FRI.

Art After Hours
Gallery event
Wake Forest
(919) 570-0765
www.sunflowerstudiowf.com

15 | SAT.

Hidden Battleship: 50th Anniversary
Behind-the-scenes of un-restored ship
Wilmington
(910) 251-5797
www.battleshipnc.com

Farmers' Winter & Craft Market
Wake Forest
(919) 556-2284
www.wakeforestmarket.org

Enslaved Person's Perspective of the Civil War
Somerset Place, Creswell
(252) 797-4560
www.nchistoricsites.org/somerset

Battle of Ft. Fisher 146th Anniversary
Ft. Fisher, Kure Beach
(919) 458-5538
www.nchistoricsites.org/fisher

17 | MON.

Martin Luther King Celebration
Edenton
(252) 482-3400
www.visitedenton.com

18 | TUES.

1861 Captures of Forts Caswell and Johnston
Fort Anderson, Winnabow
(910) 371-6613
www.nccivilwar150.com

20 | THURS.

Carolina Gospel Association: The Perrys
Rutherfordton
(828) 245-1492
www.carolinagospel.com

21 | FRI.

TRU Contest Exhibit
Opening & reception
Edenton
(252) 482-8005
www.chowanarts.org

22 | SAT.

Historic Floor Cloth Workshop
Pineville
(704) 889-7145
www.polk.nchistoricsites.org

23 | SUN.

Ensemble Vermillian
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Murphy
(828) 389-2595
www.cherokeecountychamber.com

27 | THURS.

Dance 2011
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(252) 328-6829
www.ecuarts.com

28 | FRI.

Quilting & Needle Art Extravaganza
Jan. 28-29, Statesville
(704) 864-4894
www.quiltersgallery.net

30 | SUN

"Now the Hell Will Start"
Author talks about soldier Herman Perry Monroe
(704) 283-8184
www.union.lib.nc.us

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For March: Jan. 24
For April: Feb. 24

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SayWatt?

What was Sherlock Holmes' reply when asked how he knew the murder victim had been strangled?

digit DETECTION

A	L	F	L	A	G
9	9	9	9	9	9
8	8	8	8	8	X
7	7	7	7	7	X
6	6	6	6	6	6
5	5	5	5	5	5
4	4	4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3	3	X
X	2	2	2	2	X
X	1	1	1	1	1
X	0	0	0	0	0

ALFLAG

Each of the four different letters in FLAG stands for a digit. Given the equations below, can you find the value of each letter? Use the grid to eliminate impossibilities. i.e. No square ends in 2, 3, 7, or 8. Therefore G is not 2, 3, 7, or 8. No number less than 32 has a four digit square. So A is not 0, 1, or 2. Use the grid to eliminate impossibilities.

$(AL)^2 = FLAG$ F-L=A-G

L, F, G, and A are sequential digits in ascending order.

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" _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ "

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Oh, Henry!



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+ + + + + + + + + + =

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

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PART (18) MOTH (24) PATH (20) eNTeR (13)

UNSCRAMBL*T

Cy Nical says,
"Birds of a feather...

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _."
s l c b l e b s l r a m e

Use the capital letters in the code key below to fill in the blanks above.

A E I O U G R S means
s c r a m b l e

For answers, please see page 31

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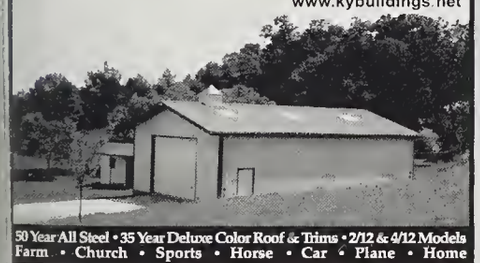
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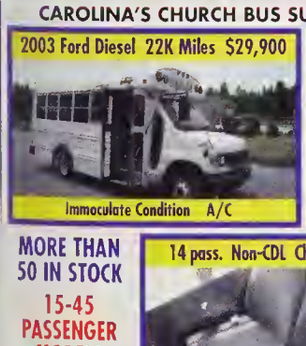


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Let's clear the air on vent-free appliances

In the 30 years since 1980, 20 million Americans have embraced vent-free gas heating appliances for cozy comfort, beautiful aesthetics and saving energy dollars.

This category includes gas logs, fireplace systems, fireplace inserts, free-standing stoves and wall heaters. In spite of these products' success, some folks may still wonder about them, so it's time to clear the air by providing some straight-shooting facts.

Product safety, performance and construction are certified by independent agencies such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL) and CSA (the recognized gas appliance industry's testing laboratory) in accordance with the national product standard, which is continually upgraded to keep up with technology. In fact, the Secretariat for the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has proclaimed that "vent-free products have arguably the best safety record of any gas appliance sold in America."

What do a toxicologist, a computer modeling guru, an environmental firm, a gas research organization, a noted university, and a world renowned research and development firm have in common? They've scrutinized vent-free technology from a variety of approaches and found it to be sound. These products meet nationally recognized indoor air quality guidelines—just like their vented counterparts.

All major national codes agree that vent-free gas heating products belong. Cities and states all across the country have adopted these codes as an integral part of their local regulations. A few places haven't caught up with the times and are slow to change, so you should always consult your local authority before installing a vent-free gas appliance.

Are you still wondering a little bit about venting? Homes are required by codes and standards to have a minimum amount of passive ventilation that will satisfy the fresh air requirements for both equipment and people. It's the same amount for both vented and vent-free gas appliances. (A November article in this magazine incorrectly stated that one must open a window when using a vent-free gas heating appliance.) Importantly, should your house be tighter than what's legal, your vent-free gas heating appliance will automatically shut-off to protect you—a fact documented by the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission staff.

At 99.9 percent efficiency, you'll appreciate turning down the central thermostat while the vent-free gas appliance heats the space where it's needed.

Now let's look at the unique advantages that this product offers. For every decorating scheme a complementary hearth or heater product exists. Imagine a real fire that looks just like wood burning at the push of a button on a remote control. At 99.9 percent efficiency, you'll appreciate turning down the central thermostat while the vent-free gas appliance heats the space where it's needed. You'll notice the improvement in your monthly utility bill, too. Installation is straightforward for your professional installer with tremendous flexibility provided by not having to knock a hole in your home's ceiling or wall for a flue. You'll love the look of the gas fire in the fireplace without the inconvenience and mess of the wood.



Vent-free appliances like this meet nationally recognized indoor air quality guidelines—just like their vented counterparts.

Vent-free gas heating appliances are available in a variety of styles and options. They operate on either propane or natural gas. Their popularity ensures a wide distribution and service network. For more information on these time-tested products, please refer to our website at www.ventfree.org.

This article was provided by the Vent-Free Gas Products Alliance Section of the Air-Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Institute, the national trade association for manufacturers and marketers of these products, as an invited response to an article on this subject published in the November 2010 issue of Carolina Country.

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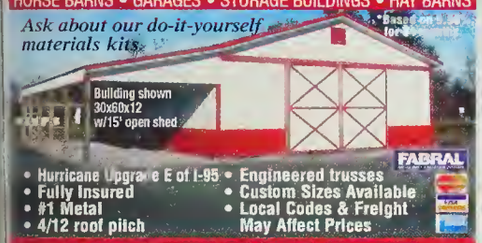
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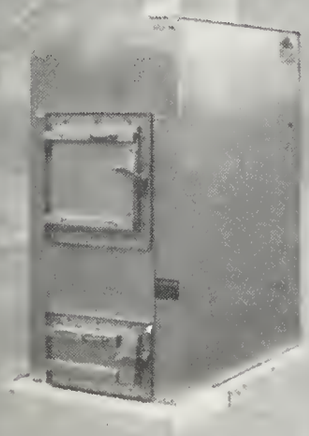
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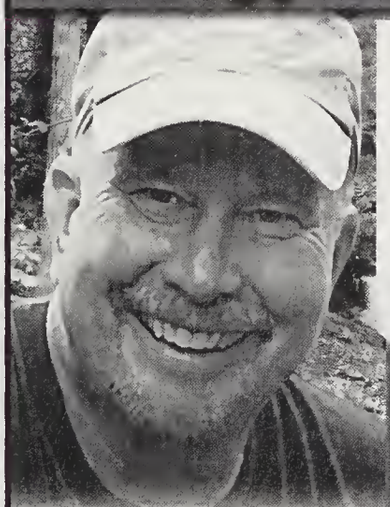
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By Arnie Katz

Is mold growing in your house?

Q: All of sudden, we have a bunch of black mold growing on the wall in the bathroom. My neighbor said it might be "killer mold," and we better do something quick. I called a local company that specializes in this, and they gave me an estimate of $20,000 to fix my house. Is this stuff really that dangerous, or is this just another scam?

Bill T., Durham

A: Great question, Bill. Unfortunately, the answer's not easy. There are some molds that are very toxic to some people. These seem to be fairly rare, although I don't think there's any real data on how prevalent they are. It's much more common for folks with conditions like asthma and allergies to react to some molds, which can contribute to making them sick. So the first thing to do is ask whether anyone in your house has symptoms that might be caused by the mold exposure. If you think they might, go to a doctor—one who actually knows something about these issues—and try to determine if your symptoms are actually related to the mold in your house.

In the meantime, there are two things to do—regardless of whether the mold is definitely making someone sick. The first thing to do is to figure out the source of excess moisture in the house. The presence of mold always indicates the presence of excessive moisture. Regardless of the species of mold, the solution will always include stopping the moisture. Most of the time, spending hundreds of dollars on lab analysis to identify the long Latin name of the particular mold visiting your home is about as useful as naming the mice chewing on your pantry.

Sometimes the source of the water is easy to find: a plumbing leak, a family member taking long showers without using the exhaust fan, an exhaust fan that doesn't work well, an unvented heater or fireplace. Sometimes it's not so obvious: a combination of factors that created ideal conditions for some mold to vacation in your bathroom. You may need to hire someone who knows what to look for. Certified home energy raters have had extensive training in building science, including moisture diagnostics. Sometimes, HVAC contractors understand these issues, as do some general contractors, some home inspectors and even some mold remediation specialists.

The presence of mold always indicates the presence of excessive moisture.

The second thing to do is to clean up the mold. If it's fairly recent, it may just be on the surface, and you can wash it off with water, a little detergent and some elbow grease. Most public health agencies no longer recommend using bleach, as exposure to the chlorine may be worse than exposure to the mold for some folks. If it's fairly extensive, and has "rooted" into the dry wall, you may have to replace some dry wall. I would consider replacing it with a fiberglass-covered dry wall rather than the traditional paper-covered dry wall. It's more expensive, but is much less likely to support mold growth in the future.



If the mold is recent, it may just be on the surface, and you can wash it off with water, a little detergent and some elbow grease

The key, though, is always to figure out how to control moisture in your home. Making sure bathroom and kitchen exhaust fans are actually working, actually ducted to the outside, and are actually being used will often help a lot. Managing the water around the foundation of your home—proper gutters, downspouts and drains, and sloping the ground away from the house—will help. Cover the ground in the crawl space with thick plastic, and consider installing a closed crawlspace system. Before your air conditioner dies, have someone do a proper load calculation to determine the right size unit for your house. Oversize air conditioners that don't run enough to remove the moisture are very common and knowing what you'll need before the unit dies on a 97-degree day in August will enable you to get it right.

Don't let yourself be panicked into spending a lot of money without doing your homework. Here in North Carolina we live in mold heaven. We certainly don't want it in the house, but let's use some common sense.

Arnie Katz is director of training and senior building science consultant at Advanced Energy in Raleigh (www.advancedenergy.org). Send your home energy questions to editor@carolinacountry.com

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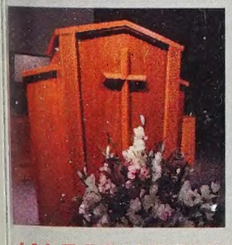
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- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup baking cocoa
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup butter, sliced
- ½ cup sugar
- ½ cup brown sugar, packed
- 3 eggs, divided
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 cup chopped pecans
- ¾ cup white chocolate chips
- ½ cup caramel ice cream topping
- ¾ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Mix together flour, cocoa and salt in a bowl; set aside. In another bowl, blend together butter and sugars until creamy. Add 2 eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Mix in vanilla. Gradually beat in flour mixture. Reserve ¾ cup batter, spread remaining batter into a greased 8-by-8-inch baking pan. Sprinkle pecans and white chocolate chips over batter. Drizzle caramel topping over top. Beat remaining egg into reserved batter until light in color, stir in chocolate chips. Spread evenly over caramel topping. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 to 35 minutes. Cool and cut into squares.

Yield: 12 to 16 brownies



Italian Scallion Meatballs

- 1 cup grape juice
- 1 cup apple jelly
- 1 cup catsup
- 1 (8-ounce) can tomato sauce
- 4 pounds frozen Italian-style meatballs
- Garnish: sliced green onions

In a small saucepan, combine all ingredients except meatballs. Cook and stir over medium heat until jelly is melted; remove from heat. Place meatballs in a slow cooker; pour sauce over top and gently stir to coat. Cover and cook on low setting for 4 hours. Sprinkle with onions at serving time.

Yield: about 11 dozen



Turkey & Wild Rice Soup

- ½ cup onion, chopped
- 2 teaspoons oil
- 1 cup deli smoked turkey, diced
- 1 cup celery, diced
- 1 cup carrots, peeled and diced
- ½ cup long-cooking wild rice, uncooked
- 1 teaspoon tarragon
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 (14-ounce) cans chicken broth
- 1 (12-ounce) can evaporated milk
- ⅓ cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup frozen peas, thawed
- 2 tablespoons dry sherry (optional)

In a skillet over medium heat, cook onion in oil for about 4 minutes, until tender. Combine onion with turkey, celery, carrots, rice and seasonings in a slow cooker; stir in broth. Cover and cook on low setting for 6 to 8 hours. Mix evaporated milk and flour; stir into soup along with peas and sherry, if using. Cover and cook on low setting for about 20 minutes, until thickened.

Yield: 6 servings

From Your Kitchen

Very Best Peach Cobbler

- 2 cups self-rising flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups evaporated milk
- 2 sticks margarine or butter
- 2 (16-ounce) cans sliced peaches

Mix flour, sugar and evaporated milk in a bowl. Set aside.

Melt 2 sticks margarine or butter in a 9-by-13-inch pan in oven. When the butter is melted, take pan out of the oven and pour the contents from the bowl into the pan with the melted butter.

Take juice from two (16-ounce) cans of peaches and pour only the juice over the top of the mixture in the pan. Do not stir!

Place the peaches from both cans on top of mixture. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 45 minutes to one hour until the top is golden brown. The more brown, the more crunch. If desired, eat while hot with vanilla ice cream.

Shirley Simmons of Pilot Mountain will receive $25 for submitting this recipe.

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* Does not include $36 policy fee, minimums may apply

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Issue Age	Male (tobacco)	Female (tobacco)
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15	N/A	N/A
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